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FLECK, Christian and Helga NOWOTNY (1993). A Marginal Discipline in the Making: Austrian Sociology in a European Context. In: Nedelmann Birgitta and Piotr Sztompka (ed.), Sociology in Europe In search of Identity, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin New York 1993



# Sociology in Europe

In Search of Identity

Edited by Birgitta Nedelmann  
and Piotr Sztompka



Walter de Gruyter  
Berlin · New York 1993

A Marginal Discipline in the Making: Austrian Sociology  
in a European Context

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This paper aims to trace the development of the main strands of sociological thought in Austria, to present characteristic research conducted by Austrian sociologists and to provide an answer to the question which European schools have influenced sociology in Austria and, if this is found to be the case, which Austrian ideas have possibly pervaded European sociology.

The title and context of this essay give the impression that within the sociological discourse there is a clear definition of what the term "European" refers to. Even at the risk of being redundant we feel a few introductory thoughts and explanations concerning the term "European" are called for. Sociology is of course fundamentally a European endeavour whose cognitive origins are rooted in the philosophy of the Europe of the Enlightenment. Its founding fathers would hardly have begun to see themselves as sociologists (or, if this neologism had not been coined by Comte, or if it had been disregarded, under some other co-extensional name) without the social impetus that was provided by the industrial revolution and required the treatment of the so-called social question.

In this paper we are obviously less interested in the common origin that all sociologies can be traced back to, but rather in questions such as, "What common features do the sociologies in the different European countries share?", "How do they differ?", and, "How do they relate to non-European schools?" Yet, is not North-American sociology also rooted in the world of thought of the Enlightenment period and its concomitant, the 'bourgeois revolution'? And then, did not close and very close relations exist between the sociologists in Europe and overseas at the beginning of the twentieth century, as both sides were engaged in the struggle for the official recognition of their field and tried to secure a place in universities for the budding science?

Yet, rather than drawing up an over-detailed and sophisticated 'Geistesgeschichte', our approach to this question of the European character of sociology and Austria's contribution to it will be restricted to a straightforward account of instances of cognitive exchange and institutional cooperation. If evidence of cooperation and mutual inspiration is found at this modest level one might then perhaps go a step further and investigate whether the European sociology thus constituted is distinct from the other sociologies in the world.



This view also implies that we do not share the widespread opposition to the Americanisation (at least) of postwar sociological studies; the following explanations will show why we object to this position.

If we agree to talk of "Austrian" sociology this means that we unthinkingly share the opinion that there is not only the scientific discipline "sociology" in Austria, but that it actually possesses distinctive features. As remains to be shown, such a tacit acceptance of this stance is problematic from a long-term historical perspective, even if it cannot be denied that Austrian sociology displayed, and still displays, a number of characteristics which could be considered specifically Austrian.

If we apply the simple criteria outlined by Shils (1970) for the assessment of the degree of institutionalisation of sociology in the various countries and periods, such as university training opportunities, the availability of specialised publications, public demand for research projects and government subsidies for their implementation, then sociology in Austria is just a quarter of a century old. The first journal that can be regarded as a strictly sociological publication was founded in the early 1960s, approximately at the same time as postgraduate degrees and, a little later, undergraduate degrees, were instituted.<sup>20</sup> The first chairs of sociology were not established until the mid-1960s.<sup>21</sup> Public demand and funds for sociological research projects were first made available in the early 1970s. Prior to this date, research projects – if empirical studies were carried out at all – were financed by the Catholic church (from 1950), by local authorities (from the late 1950s) and foreign, especially US foundations (above all the Ford Foundation).

This picture of normal scientific development is completed by adding some of the more outstanding events of the recent past. In the last few years the first generation of professors of sociology, who had in fact graduated in sociology, has been appointed to chairs<sup>22</sup>, and over the next few years their former teachers, most of whom had not received any formal training in sociology at university, will retire. On the account the most fundamental precondition for the discussion of Austria's contribution to a European sociology seems to be met: A scientific community indeed exists. A more critical look at the situation will show, however, that this consolidation at the national level was (and is) accompanied by increased provincialism and a twofold isolation from the international context:

<sup>20</sup> The journal *Die Meinung* was founded under the patronage of Lazarsfeld in 1961; in 1969 *Angewandte Sozialforschung* was first published, and in 1976 the journal *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*.

The first course in sociology was set up in 1963 at the Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) (Institute for Advanced Studies); the first university degree courses were established in 1966.

<sup>21</sup> At the end of the 1960s nine chairs were founded or taken up; in 1990 fifteen full professors and six associate professors were teaching sociology in Austria.

<sup>22</sup> Even though usually only as associate professors.

Austrian sociology is unknown outside the country; and Austrian sociologists care little whether they are intellectually represented and acknowledged abroad. No matter which indicators one chooses to apply (membership of editorial boards of foreign journals, translations into other European languages, recognition at least in the other German-speaking countries, editorships, contribution to journals, anthologies, encyclopaedias, awards, honorary doctorates, appointments as honorary or visiting professors, etc.) one will very rarely find Austrian sociologists whose activities would concentrate on interests abroad.

The alpine provincialism that this isolation reflects is much less a consequence of the relative smallness of the country, its institutions, financial and personal resources, than a result of several waves of devastation which swept through Austria's intellectual world during the twentieth century. A closer look at the history of sociological thought and research in Austria should be able to reveal how the current situation came about. Moreover, we hope that such a review might inspire comparative studies, which could be of particular interest to those countries and societies which have experienced similar personal and/or intellectual discontinuities. At the same time this review will make evident that Shils' (1970) conditions might perhaps be significant indicators of the success of institutionalisation, yet they are rather arbitrary guides when cognitive productivity and intellectual creativity are to be assessed.

## 1 Early Cosmopolitanism without an Institutional Basis: From the Beginnings to the Second World War

While sociology as institutionalised science, as the introduction showed, is a relatively recent development, its intellectual history has a much longer tradition. Sociology in Austria is generally said to have begun with Ludwik Gumplowicz. It seems reasonable to follow this approach here, especially as certain universally applicable features become particularly apparent in the work and life of Gumplowicz. Our interest in Gumplowicz is not so much engendered and justified by the cognitive content of his work – which clearly sets him apart from the so-called classic authors of the discipline – as by the fact that certain scientific and sociological insights can be traced in his oeuvre which merit our attention (Mozetič 1985). Contrary to his own claim to abstraction, i.e., that he had founded an ultimately non-instrumental, science-based sociology, the strongest impetus for his work came from his own personal experiences in the Polish national movement.<sup>23</sup> His reputation as the original proponent of the conflict perspective in non-Marxist social theory derives largely from his discussion of the question of inter-ethnic conflicts which led him to postulate a model of

<sup>23</sup> His Polish origins and lifelong connection with Poland resulted in Florian Znaniecki portraying him as a "Polish sociologist" in 1931 (Znaniecki and Znaniecki 1932: 227).



circularity of (the domination of) social groups. As professor of State and Administrative Sciences, a post he held for several decades, he developed in the provincial isolation of the University of Graz a sociological theory of the state which was based on two central concepts, the theory of superposition and an interclass model: Conquering ethnic groups (regrettably referred to as "races" by Gumpłowicz, although he cannot by any means be accused of being racist) subject the local population to be subsequently subjugated by the this time neutral intermediate class. Following Gumpłowicz, what starts out as regional ethnic mobility later develops into an innerstate conflict between dominant, ascending and dominated classes.

The relatively limited impact and influence of Gumpłowicz' work is ultimately due to social causes: His refusal to travel for family reasons drastically restricted intellectual exchanges; moreover, he found no followers or supporters amongst his colleagues and students, in fact, in later years he probably no longer tried to find any. Nevertheless, he received recognition (from colleagues abroad) and, as *terrible autrichien*, he won the respect of the international, i.e., at that time, the European sociological scientific community. One of the centres of this recognition was René Worms' Institut International de Sociologie, which elected Gumpłowicz vice-president in 1895 and appointed him president in 1909, the year of his death. Incidentally a number of other Austrian social scientists also worked at this institute (Müller 1989: 3; Stölting 1986: 63-64).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the last years of Gumpłowicz' life, it looked as if sociology in Austria had developed a firm basis (Fleck 1990). Despite all their differences over details, the founding fathers of Austrian sociology shared a common, taken-for-granted cosmopolitanism which was ultimately the result of their uncomplicated multilingualism and the fact that the number of sociologists that at the time made up the sociological scientific community in Europe was very limited. Nobody resorted to national isolationism, neither what concerns their social or political stance, nor their theoretical approach. At the turn of the century, Austrian sociologists fully participated in the international discourse of social scientists, which was conducted at the time in Europe, and their works were perceived and discussed abroad, even though – with the exception of Gumpłowicz and two rather marginal authors, Albert Schäffle and Gustav Ratzenhofer – they never succeeded in constructing the same major systematic sociologies as Georg Simmel and Emile Durkheim had (who in the first decade of the twentieth century were the most respected and renowned foreign sociologists in Vienna).<sup>24</sup> There are several reasons why their œuvre was rather limited; the principal reason was the rather delicate professional position of the

<sup>24</sup> In 1907, Simmel gave the opening lecture at the founding meeting of the Viennese Sociological Society, and Durkheim's *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique* (1894) were first published in 1908 in German by the *Philosophisch-soziologische Bücherei* for which Rudolf Eisler worked as editor.

majority of authors: Either they were typical private scholars (as for example Rudolf Goldscheid, Rudolf Eisler and the Austrian Marxists, Max Adler, Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Bauer) or they were forced to eke out a living by engaging in activities which had little to do with sociology or even scientific activity, and by teaching sociology as private lecturers at the University of Vienna, in departments which often were opposed to sociology (e.g., Ludo M. Hartmann and Wilhelm Jerusalem). These circumstances explain why productive authors never found the time to develop comprehensive theses which could have approached the model character of Kuhn's paradigms.

A further characteristic of the first Austrian sociologists is their rather too early specialisation and concentration on applied fields of sociology. We have good reason to suggest that the beginnings of the sociology of knowledge, law, and finance can be traced back to the works of Austrian authors (Jerusalem, Eugen Ehrlich and Karl Renner, Goldscheid and Joseph Schumpeter). The First World War brought this founding era to an end; the war represented not just an external political break with the past, it destroyed the self-assured, even taken-for-granted confidence of a sociology which promoted and cognitively permeated social progress. The war effectively silenced most of its proponents, after they had tried – and this is a point which has to be emphasized in this context – during the first two years of the war, to integrate war as a social phenomenon into their sociological doctrines, to control it intellectually, to comprehend it, as Jerusalem did, as an expression of the secular tendency towards individualisation (Jerusalem 1915). For the next five years Austrian sociology was to remain silent.

If we try to summarise this first stage, the following aspects will probably have to be stressed:

1. As regards their status within institutions, the founding fathers of Austrian sociology were marginalised; Gumpłowicz can almost be considered the epitomic 'marginal man'.
2. As regards their intellectual roots, they were influenced by evolutionary theory, interpreted in terms of social reform, although they never adopted racist, social-Darwinist doctrines.
3. A number of the pre-war sociologists achieved recognition outside the German-speaking area: Ehrlich and his sociology of law deserve mentioning here, as do Gumpłowicz, Ratzenhofer and Jerusalem.
4. As regards their theoretical approach, Austrian sociologists (with the exception of Gumpłowicz) show a close affinity with Ernst Mach's philosophy, whose methodological principles, even though they were geared primarily to the natural sciences, might have been developed into a successful methodology for the social sciences. (The following are just a few aspects that could have served as a common basis: Mach emphasizes the common sense approach, the continuity of everyday and scientific knowledge; he adopts a



residual concept of the "self" which is structurally similar to the self-concept of Symbolic Interactionism; the economy principle of explanation and his thesis that science had to describe as law-based explanations were unable to offer further knowledge [Haller and Stadler 1988].)

Before the First World War, Austrian sociology was cosmopolitan to a degree which was never achieved again. But this exchange of ideas had no institutional consequences, and was rather one-way as fewer ideas were imported than exported. Although we must add that the ideas that were exported at the time rarely survived for long in their pure, undiluted form.

## 2 The Advantages of Non-professionalism: Austrian Social Sciences in the Interwar Period

The First World War and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had a major impact on social sciences in Austria (Fleck 1990). Financial and institutional restrictions soon induced the first brain drain in the 1920s.<sup>25</sup> University posts went to proponents of an obscurantist social theory: Othmar Spann's blend of German Romanticism, organicism, a version of corporatism and fanatical political Catholicism supplanted all other social-scientific theories (even the long-established Austrian School of Economics lost ground). In the First Republic, sociological studies had to be conducted within the framework of other disciplines, or outside the universities.

Two examples will suffice: After Karl Bühler took up his post at the University of Vienna in 1923, he (with the help of Charlotte Bühler and a ten-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation) developed a managerial research structure which was completely new to the humanities and social sciences in Austria. Under the Böhlers and their assistant Egon Brunswik, their only collaborator whose salary was paid by the university, graduate theses were no longer isolated pieces of scientific writing but integrated contributions to a comprehensive, long-term research project. Close cooperation with the Vienna City Council facilitated psychological field and laboratory research. As a result of the excellent reputation that the Böhlers enjoyed and their frequent engagements as visiting professors in the United States, the Department of Psychology in Vienna developed into a centre of academic research (like psychoanalysis outside the universities). This was the environment in which Paul Lazarsfeld began his social-psychological research before he became self-employed and established his own research institute (Österreichische Wirtschaftropsychologische Forschungsstelle).

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, Emil Lederer, Carl Grünberg, Jacob Moreno, Karl Pribram and Hans Kelsen left Austria during this decade.

Of lesser importance as regards the material results, yet equally remarkable as an institutional innovation, was the Department of Women's Affairs in the Chamber of Labour, which was headed by Käthe Leichter and which carried out a number of surveys concerning working women, a study of women in society, before such a concept existed. The weakness of these studies was that they lacked professionalism: Leichter had been a student of Max Weber, but later she was unable to keep up with the research and debates which were carried on in the field of social science. It is indicative that her fieldworkers were not students but factory workers and trade-union members who were eager to learn and acquire education. As a consequence, their studies show a high degree of familiarity with the field and thus escape the sterile abstruseness which characterises many contemporary scientific publications; on the other hand, however, they lack references to the theoretical discourse and take no account of methodological development.

Even though aspiring social scientists were effectively barred from the one institution that under normal circumstances should be primarily responsible for this discipline, i.e., the universities, a younger generation of academics picked up the thread where it had been cut during the First World War, although they largely ignored the theoretical work of the pre-war sociologists (to give just one example: In the 1920s, Gumplowicz was in effect no longer read) and refrained from using the label "sociology" for their research. Although circumstances were far from favourable, their work covers a surprisingly wide range. Most of the authors of important sociological studies were forced to accept employment in unrelated professions in order to secure a living. The following are just a few examples of the range of posts they held: banker (Alfred Schütz), company manager (Felix Kaufmann), director of a museum (Otto Neurath), journalist (Karl Polányi), lawyer (Max Adler), teachers in primary school (Marie Jahoda), secondary (Paul Lazarsfeld) and adult education (Edgar Zilsel).

It is true, the consequences of this double footing in society were not all negative. However, the exclusion of the sociological discourse from the universities and its restriction to private circles proved detrimental, as they did not have the resources to provide the institutional structures that would have been necessary to successfully promote the transnational exchange of ideas. In this context it is important to note, though, that the interwar period saw a similar trend towards national isolationism in other countries as well (Wagner 1991). They were unable to reconstruct the fragile international network that had existed before the war. Their failure was probably also due to a growing tendency towards (political) nationalism on the part of the social scientists, who increasingly concentrated their efforts on the consolidation of their profession within the confines of the nation-state. It is indicative that drastically fewer translations of the writings of foreign sociologists were published, which was probably a result of the economic depression, yet had unintended consequences, as more recent works by the members of the international scientific community remained largely un-



known outside their own language areas. A corollary of this development was the rise of the United States to the leading – because, already then, the wealthiest – scientific power. A telltale sign of this development was the great importance that was attributed to the fellowships of the Rockefeller Foundation. Many younger, and later often famous, social scientists took this opportunity and established the contacts which a few years later facilitated their emigration to the United States. Study visits, and the resultant exchange of ideas inside Europe seem to have played a less important role. The curricula vitae of this generation of sociologists no longer included references to periods of study at other German-speaking universities which for earlier generations had almost been unavoidable; and likewise, few longer visits to France or England seem to have been made, although the same applies in the other direction.<sup>26</sup>

However, the advantages of this non-professionality, at least from a historical point of view, outweigh the disadvantages: The mobility of sociologists through various professions and environments obviously benefited their work. In contrast to sociologists today, whose curricula vitae prove that they never ventured outside the academic world, and merely proceed from one position to another inside the educational system, the sociologists of the inter-war period were forced to concentrate on the development of their themes, i.e., to pursue long-term objectives in their work, which meant they published less, yet their publications were more refined, more complete. They did not have the current bad habit of 'recycling' over and over again even the most trivial ideas. Their practical experience is also reflected in their sociological work and professional practice: Just remember the striking clarity and power of expression that characterises the work of those writers who were also engaged in adult education or worked for the social democratic education centre. The most famous representative of this group is Paul Lazarsfeld, who realised this himself and summarised it in the aphorism that in later years he led all his research teams like a socialist youth group.

The institutional changes, which we can only hint at here (and which have by no means been sufficiently researched, especially as regards the one aspect which is interesting from a point of view of the history of science, i.e., the funding of European social science through the Rockefeller Foundation), are reflected at the cognitive level in a two-fold manner.

Relatively unaffected by this enforced movement towards localism were the contributions to sociological theories and methodologies; nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that relatively few publications dealt with sociological theory in its narrow meaning. The authors who today are generally considered the classics (Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Pareto, to name just the most important ones) were

<sup>26</sup> An exception were the foreign adherents and students of the Vienna Circle, of the Psycho-analytical Association and of Bühler's department; as far as we can trace, the largest number of students seems to have again come from the US.

practically never featured in discussions.<sup>27</sup> There are, however, two exceptions: One of these is Austro-Marxism which was able to maintain an uninterrupted debate despite the break brought about by the First World War, and which continued its admittedly inherently Marxist, yet undogmatic discourse after the war – even though the majority of the authors who originally belonged to this school now were active politicians and rarely published purely sociological works (Mozetič 1987). The second exception is some of the work by Max Weber, whose methodology was further developed by Alfred Schütz in his *Sinnhafter Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (The Phenomenology of the Social World) (1932). It was only in the 1970s that Austrian sociologists began to acknowledge the work of Schütz, as they were introduced by American tributes to Schütz and his work during his years of emigration. In this context we should also mention Felix Kaufmann's *Methodenlehre der Sozialwissenschaften* (1936) (Methodology of the Social Sciences, 1944) which emerged out of his intellectual exchange with the Mises Circle, of which he and Schütz were members, and the Vienna Circle where Kaufmann first heard of Otto Neurath's proclamation in favour of the unity of science.

The best known Austrian work in the field of social research is *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (Lazarsfeld-Jahoda and Zeisel 1933), which Lazarsfeld, Jahoda, and Zeisel wrote without having had any contact with other social scientists in Europe (Fleck 1990; Nowotny 1983). The authors had received their training in psychology under Bühler and in an intellectual environment which was dominated by Austro-Marxism. This ethnographic study of the life of the long-term unemployed (which they referred to as sociography without knowing of the efforts by German [Tönnies, Geiger] and Dutch [Steinmetz] sociologists, who had used the same label) was like their market research, which they also conducted, albeit to a lesser degree, influenced by American examples, if at all: Lynd and Lynd's (1929) *Middletown* and their market research. Yet even this influence should not be overstressed. *Marienthal's* originality derives from its concentration on content and its readiness to adopt a new methodological approach irrespective of what standard procedures were propounded by the sociologists in the academic world. The awareness of the problem stems from the integration of the young social psychologists in a (social democratic) social movement; the necessary methodological, argumentative and technical rigorism had been drummed into them by their mentor Karl Bühler, and their research was financed by the Vienna Chamber of Labour and the Rockefeller Foundation. This constellation – the feeling of belonging to a certain environment, cautious control by an older and experienced scientist, funds given by people who did not try to interfere, and innovative researchers – can hardly be thought of as a gen-

<sup>27</sup> The level of discussion of this and other authors is highlighted in a book which was published after the death of most of them: Menzel, Adolf, *Grundriß der Soziologie*. (Menzel 1938).



eral model, partly because it lacks a stable structural basis, but as a happy moment in the history of science. It is at least informative as it clearly shows what factors were responsible for the positive outcome – even though internationality was one of them only with the benefit of hindsight. The final result was, however, even at the time more widely discussed abroad than in Austria – not least because of the unfavourable political situation – and did not need to fear comparison with similar studies (Nowotny 1983).

Unfortunately, fascism descended on Central Europe before this solitary innovation could have any institutional consequences. The forced emigration of the socialist and liberal Jewish intelligentsia from Europe in the 1930s ruined all the institutions and the discourse that the social sciences had by then achieved (Fleck 1987, 1988). Paradoxically, this emigration forced the exiles into academic careers to an extent which would not have been possible if the conditions of the interwar period had prevailed. More exiles were appointed to chairs in America than were ever appointed professors in Austria in the whole century. It is unlikely that so many would have been successful here, or that those exiles that were successful could have succeeded in a climate dominated by Austro-Fascism and National Socialism. The costs that those exiles who were unlucky had to bear, and the costs of the intellectual adaptation, which was required of those successful, are the reverse side of the coin.

Summarising the second stage in the history of Austrian sociology we are presented with a rather disjointed picture:

1. The unfavourable economic situation during the First Republic resulted in the stagnation of all social scientific institutions.
2. During this period, exchanges of personnel and ideas were only with the United States, from where material and personnel was imported; the end of this period saw a reversal of this trend, when a massive, forced brain drain and emigration of European intellectuals to America occurred.

In retrospective, the debate conducted within the social sciences during the interwar period appears strangely provincial, isolated from historic or external references (although these existed in neighbouring disciplines, such as economics and psychology); refraining from an in-depth discussion of the works of the classic authors or the other founding fathers. Consequently, we find no professional sociologists in the interwar period, only researchers who were active in the social sciences. At the same time, a proliferation of publications can be noticed and originality flourished. There was no specialisation in certain fields, and no mutual exclusion. This unity of the sociological discourse was not real though, but a potential unity, analysable in retrospect.

Just as the First World War had put an end to the discourse of evolutionism and social reform two decades earlier, the rising National Socialist movement destroyed the environments in which this predominantly young group of social scientists had conducted their first studies. Not least because the Austrian exiles

were comparatively younger than, for example, the German émigrés, many of them succeeded in making a new beginning in the United States.

### 3 Emergent Professionalisation after 1945: Turning the Inward Look Outward?

After 1945, Austria set itself the task of political and economic reconstruction which was achieved within a decade, culminating in 1955 with obtaining its neutrality. Its cultural reconstruction took much longer. Too many of its most gifted intellectuals, scientists and other persons working in the cultural field had been forced to leave the country or had perished in concentration camps. The dark period which separated post-1945 Austria from its pre-fascist cultural heritage had engendered severe forms of discontinuities and was to cast its shadow, wrapped into a 'culture of (deliberate) forgetting' for a long time to come. At the universities, priority in reconstructing was accorded to the re-establishment of natural and engineering sciences. In the humanities a considerable number of professors who had been teaching during the fascist regime, and some of whom had been outspoken supporters of the fascist regime, were able to stay on. In the social sciences the situation was bleak. The overall situation was aggravated by the fact that no serious and systematic effort had been undertaken to recall at least a small number of the country's scientists in exile. In 1953 one of the first courses in sociology (which was not yet a 'course of study') was offered at the University of Vienna by Leopold Rosenmayr who had just returned from the US after a two-year Rockefeller fellowship. Slowly the most coveted sociological 'import article' from the US took root in postwar Austria: Empirical social research. First attempts were made to use the new methodology in research projects exploring family life, young people's attitudes and behaviour, urban life and housing and was supported financially by the Municipality of Vienna and other public bodies. The Catholic church also supported this brand of sociological inquiry by setting up a small research institute outside the university. The political parties showed the keenest interest of all and initiated research into public opinion. Election behaviour and other, related, attitude surveys figured among the prominent research topics which were to find their (institutional) home in special institutes which closely collaborated with the larger political parties. Market surveys were to follow. Other research groups were set up both inside and outside the universities, dealing with problems of aging, health provisions, social problems and social policy questions. But not all themes open to empirical investigation flourished equally. One contemporary witness of these early research developments remembers that certain themes were deliberately left out, namely all those considered "politically sensitive", such as questions of



Austria's political culture or problems too closely related to labour and industry (Gehmacher 1988).

In 1963, the only significant institutional innovation for a long time to come relevant to the development of Austrian sociology took place. Characteristically, it came from 'outside' and from 'above'. The former Austrian social scientists Oskar Morgenstern and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, both of whom had risen to great eminence in the United States, convinced the Ford Foundation to help set up an Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) (Institute for Advanced Studies) in Vienna. Despite its name, this was not a Princeton-type institution, but a post-graduate research and training institution of high quality, which was to follow the explicit mandate to introduce a young generation of economists, sociologists, political scientists and informatics students to quantitative methodology and related formal methods not taught at the time at Austrian universities. The IHS as it came to be called, not only provided greater visibility for the social sciences, including sociology. It also trained successive generations of young graduates who would subsequently move into new positions created during the phase of expansion of Austrian universities, or into the additional staff positions created inside ministries, banks and other administrative and political bodies. The establishment of the IHS coincided with the modernisation of Austria's political elites at the time – a new generation of political leaders and functionaries who were open to empirical methods and eager to use them as tools for analysis and wherever possible to 'steer' policies. They were ready to emulate the kind of pragmatic relationships prevailing in the United States between social science researchers, government and industry. In reality, however, the political hegemony weighing upon the social sciences and social science research, had not been cast off. The Board of the IHS was constituted along the lines of strict parity, meaning that it reflected in its composition and spirit the then dominant and highly praised model of Austrian "social partnership".

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Austrian university system underwent its phase of expansion which considerably benefited the social sciences. By breaking up the old philosophy and law faculties and setting up new ones for "socio-economic studies" modernisation had finally reached the universities. This was accompanied by other major reforms in their structure and organisation. Sociology finally became a course of study in its own right with the possibility to graduate in sociology in 1966. In the University of Vienna sociology continued, however, to occupy departments in two faculties, with the difference lying less in content and orientation than in the recruitment of teaching staff. A number of other small institutes were set up outside the universities in the 1970s and following decades, leading to a rather incoherent mosaic of research sites for empirical projects. The situation within the universities was also characterised by incoherence and diversity in teaching programmes as well as little contact among university departments across the country. As the number of 'professionally' trained sociology graduates increased the simmering generation conflict – fuelled by

diverging political outlooks and general world views – came to climax, when the Austrian Sociological Association was practically taken over by the younger generation in the mid-1970s.

Summerising the main developments which characterised Austrian sociology in the period after 1945 the dominant picture appears to be one of inadequate coherence and the inability to build up the critical mass needed for a strong professional sociological community. At the same time empirical social research constituted a strong link, albeit one of dependency, with the political-administrative establishment and society at large. In particular, we note:

1. The late start of sociology inside the universities led to an unbalanced dispersal of empirical research outside the universities. There, sociological research found itself often dependent on political and administrative sponsors. With the exception of the IHS, most research institutes outside the university were and continue to be of extremely small size, which in turn increases their vulnerability to fluctuating variations in the amount of funding available. Their small size also prevents the better coordination of research. It helps to explain the lack of openness and failure to build up a 'communicative culture' of scholarly debate inside the country, since often researchers or research teams tend to be competitors, not so much as regards the quality of their work, but for funds or influence among sponsors. It also may help to explain why much of the work produced under these circumstances tends to be of short-lived value, since no incentives exist to accumulate results or to build up long-term and more continuous lines of research and sociological inquiry.
2. Within the universities the situation is not much better, however. Due to the dominant conservative climate in the universities, especially in the first two decades after the war, the general recruitment policy was not always fortunate. The first generation of professors of sociology were no trained sociologists, but nevertheless held life-long appointments. No systematic training of highly qualified graduates or the formation of 'schools' as it exists in the natural sciences, could be observed (Nowotny 1989). In contrast to the economic sciences, sociology departments did not produce the critical number of sociologists – maybe as a deliberate attempt to prevent too many sociologists who would not find employment. The 'symbiotic groups' of policy advisors and politicians, so typical of economists, include few, if any, sociologists (Wagner 1985). An estimated third of the graduates in sociology finds employment in ministries, municipal and other public bodies (Haller 1987). There, they undoubtedly helped to reduce somewhat the traditional "juridical monopoly" held by civil servants trained in legal studies. They also helped to keep the funding of projects flowing and increased their quality and professionalism over time in what also in Austria has been a *Difficult Dialogue between Producers and Users of Social Science Research* (Nowotny and Lambiri-Dimaki 1985).



3. On the positive side the initial reception of empirical methods and the turn towards quantitative methods has led over the years to a certain consolidation in methodological terms and to a pragmatic mixture of more quantitative and qualitative approaches. No "Methodenstreit" nor any other controversies characterised Austrian sociology during this period. This may have been facilitated by the fact that apart from institutes engaged in public opinion research only one institute exists which de facto could afford to be engaged in long-term and quantitative handling of data while the majority of small-sized institutes are limited by their lack of infrastructure and funds to participate in building up data banks. Hence, work with quantitative data has often to be left to other disciplines or to non-university institutes.
4. In terms of content a certain eclecticism has prevailed within the universities as far as contributions to the theoretical understanding of society are concerned. (Thus, one could caricature the situation by pointing to the piecemeal nature of the ordinary diet in sociological theory: a bit of Parsons, intermingling with a bit of critical theory, a bit of structural Marxism and a bit of Bourdieu, followed by a more recent dose of Luhmann etc.. Of course, such an eclecticism could also be interpreted as related to the peripheral situation of the country. It has to be open to all major currents of ideas without being too selective ... ) In general, orientation in the past was strongly influenced by theoretical developments in Germany and/or the way that US sociological trends were received there. This can partly be explained by the small size of the country and the relatively few sociology courses available within the universities. It also reflects, however, a deeper intellectual division of work which will be dealt with below.
5. The relatively strong 'service orientation' of much of the sociological research carried out in the form of empirical research projects and the close ties to sponsoring bodies have also prevented sociologists taking a stand in public debates. Not only do 'politically sensitive' topics still tend to be absent from the official research agenda, but until recently, it was also difficult to find a public forum, e.g., in the media, for sociologists to participate in public debates.

What then, in this situation, is characteristic of a small country that until 1989 found itself on the periphery of the current of international events and the flow of intellectual ideas? What, if anything, in such a situation can be termed "specifically Austrian" and what contributions can be expected from its sociology to a perhaps emerging "European sociology"?

Many years ago the economist Simon Kuznets (1960) analysed the problems small nations experience with economic growth. His empirically grounded observations made it clear that the economic structure of small countries offered less room for diversification. Production factors and output were concentrated in a few industrial sectors. For small countries foreign trade played a larger role and

enabled them to concentrate on those goods whose production offered comparative advantage. In many ways, however, they were disadvantaged compared to larger countries – and yet, as economic history shows, some of them succeeded. Kuznets believed that ultimately the strengths of small countries were their flexibility and their greater social cohesion. Their main advantage lay in their social institutions and the "quality" of the people, enabling those "social inventions" that gave effective compensation for the disadvantages they incurred because of size (Kuznets 1960: 31).

What seems to hold for economic history also holds for the history of scientific achievements. Initially small size carries with it some obvious disadvantages. This is perhaps most pronounced in the natural and technical sciences, where the concentration of scarce funds in strategic areas, the structure of a country's industry and transfer links in technological knowledge may lead to what has become known as the "small country squeeze". Small countries are confronted with hard choices between offensive and defensive research strategies, between provincialism and concentrating on some pioneering research (Nowotny 1985). But does size matter in the social sciences and the humanities? What regulates the flow of ideas, the liveliness of scholarly debates, the contributions sociology can make both within its own field and in a wider context?

In our analysis we emphasized the importance of structural and institutional factors as well as how individuals in certain positions behave. Yet, it is also important to see that these positions are part of a larger intellectual field which is structured according to major tensions between political elites and the intellectuals of a country. Given the history of major upsets and discontinuities which have often linked the fate of many of Austria's most brilliant intellectuals to political events beyond their control, the present 'docility' of its social scientists can also be interpreted as being part of a long term historical development pattern. In their own way and in the wake of their modernisation, political parties, the administrative establishment and other public bodies made use of whatever services were offered to them by sociologists. These, as Schumpeter used to say about economists, were eager to prove their "self-inflicted utility". Sociological institutes within the universities turned out to be structurally too weak to become the institutional centres for the pursuit of more long-term, basic research interests. Moreover, the prevailing eclecticism and the lack of coherence among institutes, often induced a predisposition also in their graduates for a highly individualistic style of work, which in turn fits well with the predominant "small niche"-mentality individual research projects or small-size institutes offer. Many of the observed features are thus reproduced by the very structures described above and can in the end be linked to the failure in attaining a critical mass of sociological scholarship.

Compared with the richness and originality of the sociological contributions that came from Austria during the interwar period, the postwar professionalisation of sociology appears as a mixed blessing. While some of the most promi-



nent figures in former times had been trained in law, statistics, psychology or other disciplines while being auto-didacts in sociology, the present generation of professionally trained sociologists are often cut off from knowledge in disciplines other than a highly specialised sub-field of sociology. On the other hand, the general conditions at the Austrian universities, while they have many disadvantages, still offer opportunities for following courses other than those narrowly prescribed, provided students take the initiative.

#### 4 What then Does Austrian Sociology Have to Offer?

Even though no major theoretical or methodological development has occurred yet that led to an impact beyond its borders, a thematic concentration can be found in areas dealing with inequality, unemployment, health, social marginality, ethnic diversity and conflict, migration problems and a variety of other social and health policy issues. Work on such topics is not confined to an individual empathy with socially marginalised groups, but is also pursued in institutional settings. Due to the unbalanced distribution of more stable institutional resources and access to larger data bases, a certain methodological inventiveness can be found, for instance in the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods already mentioned.

Yet, it is also fair to say, that these 'Austrian themes' have remained very much bound up with the situation inside Austria. Compared to other small countries, e.g., the Nordic countries, little comparative work has been undertaken so far, which by design would put the situation in Austria in relation to other European countries. More recently a noticeable interest in the history of Austrian sociology has grown – a sign of its maturing cognitive as well as social identity (Langer 1988; Fleck 1990).

An Austrian specificity can be discerned, however, when looking at how certain themes are anchored in the wider social field of intellectual production. What is remarkable here is the fact that a kind of 'substitution or overlap effect' can be observed between sociology on one side and artistic, and in particular, literary production on the other. Every society has to deal with themes related to questions about its identity, the way in which its past is being interpreted in relation to the present, which general orientation it is following or wishes to pursue, what are perceived to be some of its most pressing problems or which kinds of polarisations or tensions are threatening the social fabric. Which of these themes are addressed and analysed by the arts and which by the social sciences or humanities, and in which form, depends on factors which are too complex to be dealt with here (Wagner and Wittrock 1991). A number of leading themes – about identity, inequality, city-country relations, social isolation etc. – are dealt with in Austrian literature and sociology alike, thus producing an

unintended complementarity. Although taking place outside of established academic institutions, literary production may indirectly stimulate and hence influence sociological production and vice versa. One should perhaps remember that sociology from its very beginning has been torn between a more 'scientific' direction, imitating the natural sciences, and tending towards a more literary heritage (Lepenies 1985). Based on such a history (which is different in different countries), sociology emerges as a discipline attempting to be something which is neither 'science' nor 'literature'. It aims at becoming a third culture in its own right showing substantial overlap with the other two cultures, without complete identification with either of them. Recent trends towards being more literary can be observed in sociology generally, in the style of writing as well as in content. Austrian sociology, given its links with a wider cultural and social field of intellectual production, and the prestige literary production enjoys in this country, may well have substantial contributions to make to a (European) sociology as part of an emerging third culture.

Present auspices for sociology here as elsewhere in Europe have to deal with completely new challenges. The dramatic events of 1989, the demise of the Eastern block and the ideology which kept it under control and in isolation from the rest of the world, as well as the present processes of transformation which these societies have to undergo, present formidable challenges to the creativity, social inventiveness, and political maturity of the social sciences as a whole. An entire set of concepts which tells more about the societal conditions under which they originated than illuminating the present, let alone providing guidelines for the future, have to be re-thought, re-invented, and made operational in the very near future. Other challenges await the social sciences as regards the environment where the magnitude of human intervention, of individual and collective action as well as of how social institutions function, cannot be denied. Society and its individuals are the causes of environmental degradation, victims of its impact and yet at the same time, managers of a 'sustainable development'. Other challenges emanate from the relentless thrust towards globalisation and internationalisation, while, at the same time tensions of inter-ethnic and racial conflicts are mounting in many parts of the world. The last decade has also amply demonstrated the potential anger and risks associated with science and technology, necessitating a better understanding of the social conditions which shape them. From the formidable nature of these issues it is clear that it is indeed the social sciences as a whole, and not a single discipline like sociology, which are challenged. Nevertheless, as a cognitive field organised in the form of a discipline, sociology will have to find its specific mode of response.

With the unexpected turn of world events Austria may find itself in an unexpectedly advantageous position to take up at least some of the challenging issues outlined above. Its geographical position as a neighbour to three former Eastern block countries, to whom it is linked through a common, conflict-ridden history which inspired some of the founding fathers of Austrian sociology more than



one hundred years ago, may be one of the comparative advantages which accrue to a small country. But as Kuznets (1960) has reminded us, the real advantage comes only from such a country's 'social inventiveness'. Although many of our critical comments above may not point to an optimistic conclusion, Austrian sociology at the turn of this century may well receive another chance. This time, contrary to the situation it found itself in after 1945, it is invited to look outwards as well as inwards. And since no social science discipline evolves independently from the society in which it finds itself, this society will certainly undergo major transformations in its sense of national identity, ethnic composition and in the functioning and relative strength of its major political and economic institutions. Sociology as a discipline which originated in the era of the Austro-Hungarian empire owed much to the diversity and conflicts of that society. Austrian sociology at the threshold of the twenty-first century will lack neither. Contrary to their forerunners, however, Austrian sociologists will be able to draw upon a vastly increased stock of European social science knowledge. They will have the chance to become part of a network of scholars who are at work to transform the different national European traditions of their discipline into something which may be called European sociology.

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